



January 28, 2019

Governor Jay Inslee  
Office of the Governor  
Southern Resident Orca Task Force  
Olympia, WA 98504

**RE: Removing \$750,000 from your proposed budget to study the associated economic and social impacts – as well as mitigation costs – of the potential breaching or removal of the Lower Snake River Dams**

Dear Governor Inslee,

The Pioneer Ports (A two state, three port consortium consisting of the Port of Whitman County, the Port of Clarkston and the Port of Lewiston, ID) have been monitoring the work of the Southern Resident Orca Task Force and are aware that orca habitat is a topic of serious discussion across the State of Washington. All Washingtonians care about the future of the Orca and no one can dispute this resident pod is in trouble. The Pioneer Ports have always supported salmon recovery efforts in our region, including improvements to hydro, habitat, harvest and hatchery programs. We also support many of the elements outlined in the Southern Resident Orca Task Force report and recommendations dated November 16, 2018.

Your budget priorities include a \$750,000 proposal to fund a stakeholder process on the associated economic and social impacts as well as mitigation costs of Snake River dam removal. We think that this plan is redundant and duplicative considering the Columbia River Systems Operations Environmental Impact Statement (CRSO EIS) currently underway by multiple federal agencies. All Northwest states and tribes are already cooperating in this EIS process, which includes an evaluation of the four lower Snake River dams, along with an economic impact analysis and stakeholder input. This EIS process also has multiple opportunities for public engagement providing all stakeholders a voice.

A state-level effort would not be as comprehensive as the current federal effort. Given the limited size and scope of such an effort as compared to the CRSO EIS process, it is sound to question whether the recommendations generated by such a study would result in meaningful help for the orcas. The Pioneer Ports think this study would not be the best use of limited taxpayer resources.

After decades of using other arguments in their attempts to justify removing the four lower Snake River dams, some environmental groups have latched on to the plight of the orcas. They are now stating that removing the four lower Snake River dams is the primary solution to improving the orcas' diminished Chinook salmon supply. Despite the availability of accurate information from NOAA and other reputable sources, these groups are using the orcas to play on the public's sympathies and promote their real goal: removal of the four lower Snake River dams.

Fish from the Snake and Columbia Rivers are just one part of the list of Chinook runs which are important for orcas in Puget Sound. These orcas consume many different salmon stocks not limited to fish from the Columbia and Snake Rivers. While increasing overall salmon abundance is likely to help the whales, it is important to understand that NOAA Fisheries has concluded that because orcas feed on many different stocks at different times, one narrow approach to fish recovery, such as breaching dams on the Snake River, will not make a measurable improvement for orca survival. Also, given the fact these are federal dams and would require years of debate for congressional agreement, such an effort does not fit into the time sensitive Southern Resident Orca Task Force goals for saving the pod.

What do the lower Snake River dams mean to the Pioneer Port's regional economy and Washington State? The federal hydro system provides 60% of the Pacific Northwest's clean power, protects rural communities and big cities alike from floods, creates a river highway that links the Northwest to the rest of the U.S. and the world, and provides recreational opportunities and irrigation for over 7 million acres of farmland producing \$8 billion in agricultural income. Barging on the inland Columbia Snake River System moves, on average, approximately 9 million tons of cargo valued at over \$3 billion each year. Most years see nearly 10% of the nation's wheat exports traveling through our lower Snake River dams. Our local farm families and grain cooperatives rely on navigation on the Snake River as a key element of our multi-modal transportation system to bring their commodities to market.

Because of their location, size and ability to help meet peak power loads, the four lower Snake River dams do much more than generate electricity – they are key to keeping the system reliable and help support wind energy. These dams maintain the constant balance of generation and loads, or electrical demand, which is necessary for power system reliability, critical to keeping the lights on, every minute, every day. The energy from these dams power the Washington State economy with clean, renewable energy that would be difficult, if not impossible to replace.

The Pioneer Ports recognize the plight of the Orcas in Puget Sound and support many of the recommendations in the Southern Resident Orca Task Force final report. However, the Pioneer Ports does not support the \$750,000 proposal to fund a stakeholder process on the associated economic and social impacts as well as mitigation costs of Snake River dam removal. The Washington members of the Pioneer Ports will be working with the legislature to request removal of the \$750,000 proposal to fund the study. It is a duplicate effort of federal agencies, and should not lie on the backs of Washington taxpayers.

Sincerely,



Kristine Meyer, Commissioner  
Port of Whitman County



Tom Kammerzell, Commissioner  
Port of Whitman County



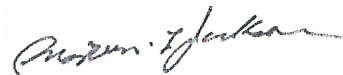
John E. Love, Commissioner  
Port of Whitman County



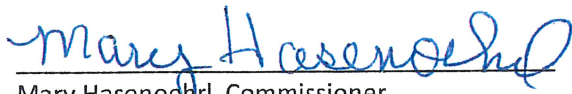
Mark Brigham, Commissioner  
Port of Clarkston



Wayne Tippet  
Port of Clarkston



Marvin Jackson  
Port of Clarkston



Mary Hasenoehrl, Commissioner  
Port of Lewiston



Jerry Klemm, Commissioner  
Port of Lewiston



Mike Thomason, Commissioner  
Port of Lewiston

Cc:

**WA State Senate Ways and Means:**

Senator Christine Rolfes (D) District 23  
Senator David Frockt (D) District 46  
Senator Mark Mullet (D) District 5  
Senator John Braun (R) District 20  
Senator Sharon Brown (R) District 8  
Senator Jim Honeyford (R) District 15

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Rep. June Robinson (D) District 38  
Rep. Steve Bergquist (D) District 11  
Rep. Drew Stokesbary (R) District 31  
Rep. Skyler Rude (R) District 16  
Rep. Drew MacEwen (R) District 35

**WA State House Capital Budget:**

Rep. Steve Tharinger (D) District 24  
Rep. Beth Doglio (D) District 22  
Rep. Strom Peterson (D) District 21  
Rep. Richard DeBolt (R) District 20  
Rep. Norma Smith (R) District 10  
Rep. Mike Steele (R) District 12

**Others:**

George Caan, CEO, WPUDA  
Kent Lopez, CEO, WRECA  
Kris Johnson, President, AWB  
Candice Bock, Director, AWC  
Eric D. Johnson, Executive Director, WA Public Ports Association  
Scott Hutsell, President, WA State Association of Counties

**Other Legislators:**

Senator Mark Schoesler (R) District 9  
Senator Maureen Walsh (R) District 16  
Rep. Brad Klippert (R) District 8  
Rep. Matt Boehnke (R) District 8  
Rep. Mary Dye (R) District 9  
Rep. Joe Schmick (R) District 9  
Rep. Bill Jenkin (R) District 16